Song of Songs
שיר השירים
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Song of Songs

Chapter 1

The Song of Songs, by a Or “concerning.” Solomon.
b Heb. “Let him give me of the kisses of his mouth!” Oh, give me of the kisses of your mouth, -b For your love is more delightful than wine.
Your ointments yield a sweet fragrance, Your name is like finest c Meaning of Heb. uncertain. oil— Therefore do maidens love you.
Draw me after you, let us run! d Emendation yields “Bring me, O king, to your chambers.” The king has brought me to his chambers. -d Let us delight and rejoice in your love, Savoring it more than wine— e Understanding mesharim as related to tirosh; cf. Aramaic merath. Like new wine -e they love you!
I am dark, but comely, O daughters of Jerusalem— Like the tents of Kedar, Like the pavilions of Solomon.
Don’t stare at me because I am swarthy, Because the sun has gazed upon me. My mother’s sons quarreled with me, They made me guard the vineyards; My own vineyard I did not guard.
Tell me, you whom I love so well; Where do you pasture your sheep? Where do you rest them at noon? Let me not be c Meaning of Heb. uncertain. as one who strays -c Beside the flocks of your fellows.
If you do not know, O fairest of women, Go follow the tracks of the sheep, And graze your kids f As a pretext for coming. By the tents of the shepherds.
I have likened you, my darling, To a mare in Pharaoh’s chariots:
Your cheeks are comely with plaited wreaths, Your neck with strings of jewels.
We will add wreaths of gold To your spangles of silver.
While the king was on his couch, My nard gave forth its fragrance.
My beloved to me is a bag of myrrh Lodged between my breasts.
My beloved to me is a spray of henna blooms From the vineyards of En-gedi.
Ah, you are fair, my darling, Ah, you are fair, With your dove-like eyes!
And you, my beloved, are handsome, Beautiful indeed! Our couch is in a bower;
Cedars are the beams of our house, Cypresses the rafters.

Chapter 2

I am a rose a Lit. “crocus.” of Sharon, A lily of the valleys.
Like a lily among thorns, So is my darling among the maidens.
Like an apple tree among trees of the forest, So is my beloved among the youths. I delight to sit in his shade, And his fruit is sweet to my mouth.
He brought me to the banquet room b Meaning of Heb. uncertain. And his banner of love was over me. -b
“Sustain me with raisin cakes, Refresh me with apples, For I am faint with love.”
His left hand was under my head, His right arm embraced me.

I adjure you, O maidens of Jerusalem, By gazelles or by hinds of the field: Do not wake or rouse Love until it please!
Hark! My beloved! There he comes, Leaping over mountains, Bounding over hills.
My beloved is like a gazelle Or like a young stag. There he stands behind our wall, Gazing through the window, Peering through the lattice.
My beloved spoke thus to me, “Arise, my darling; My fair one, come away!
For now the winter is past, The rains are over and gone.
The blossoms have appeared in the land, The time of pruning c Or “singing.” has come; The song of the turtledove Is heard in our land.
The green figs form on the fig tree, The vines in blossom give off fragrance. Arise, my darling; My fair one, come away!
“O my dove, in the cranny of the rocks, Hidden by the cliff, Let me see your face, Let me hear your voice; For your voice is sweet And your face is comely.”
Catch us the foxes, The little foxes That ruin the vineyards— For our vineyard is in blossom.
My beloved is mine And I am his Who browses among the lilies.
When the day d Emendation yields “declines”; cf. Jer. 6.4. blows gently -d And the shadows flee, e Septuagint reads “lengthen”; cf. Jer. 6.4. Set out, my beloved, Swift as a gazelle Or a young stag, For the hills of spices! f Heb. bather of uncertain meaning; 8.14 reads besamim, “spices.”

Chapter 3

Upon my couch at night a I.e., in a dream. I sought the one I love— I sought, but found him not.
“I must rise and roam the town, Through the streets and through the squares; I must seek the one I love.” I sought but found him not.
b Lit. “The watchmen met me.” I met the watchmen -b Who patrol the town. “Have you seen the one I love?”
Scarcely had I passed them When I found the one I love. I held him fast, I would not let him go Till I brought him to my mother’s house, To the chamber of her who conceived me
I adjure you, O maidens of Jerusalem, By gazelles or by hinds of the field: Do not wake or rouse Love until it please!
Who is she that comes up from the desert Like columns of smoke, In clouds of myrrh and frankincense, Of all the powders of the merchant?
There is Solomon’s couch, Encircled by sixty warriors Of the warriors of Israel,
All of them trained c Cf. Akkadian ah©a†zu, “to learn.” in warfare, Skilled in battle, Each with sword on thigh Because of terror by night.
King Solomon made him a palanquin Of wood from Lebanon.
He made its posts of silver, Its back d Meaning of Heb. uncertain. of gold, Its seat of purple wool. Within, it was decked with e Emendation yields “ebony, / O maidens of Jerusalem!” love By the maidens of Jerusalem. -e
O maidens of Zion, go forth And gaze upon King Solomon Wearing the crown that his mother Gave him on his wedding day, On his day of bliss.

Chapter 4

Ah, you are fair, my darling, Ah, you are fair. Your eyes are like doves Behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats Streaming down Mount Gilead.
Your teeth are like a flock of ewes a Cf. 6.6; exact nuance of qeṣuboth uncertain, perhaps “shorn ones.” Climbing up from the washing pool; All of them bear twins, And not one loses her young.
Your lips are like a crimson thread, Your mouth is lovely. Your brow behind your veil [Gleams] like a pomegranate split open.

Your neck is like the Tower of David, Built b Apparently a poetic figure for jewelry; meaning of Heb. uncertain. to hold weapons, -b Hung with a thousand shields— All the quivers of warriors.
Your breasts are like two fawns, Twins of a gazelle, Browsing among the lilies.
c See notes at 2.17. When the day blows gently And the shadows flee, I will betake me to the mount of myrrh, To the hill of frankincense.
Every part of you is fair, my darling, There is no blemish in you.
From Lebanon come with me; From Lebanon, my bride, with me! Trip down from Amana's peak, From the peak of Senir d Cf. Deut. 3.9. and Hermon, From the dens of lions, From the hills e Emendation yields "lairs"; cf. Nah. 2.13. of leopards.
You have captured my heart, My own, f Lit. "sister"; and so frequently below. my bride, You have captured my heart With one [glance] of your eyes, With one coil of your necklace.
How sweet is your love, My own, my bride! How much more delightful your love than wine, Your ointments more fragrant Than any spice!
Sweetness drops From your lips, O bride; Honey and milk Are under your tongue; And the scent of your robes Is like the scent of Lebanon.
A garden locked Is my own, my bride, A fountain locked, A sealed-up spring.
Your limbs are an orchard of pomegranates And of all luscious fruits, Of henna and of nard—
Nard and saffron, Fragrant reed and cinnamon, With all aromatic woods, Myrrh and aloes— All the choice perfumes.
g Emendation yields "The spring in my garden / Is a well of fresh water." [You are] a garden spring, A well of fresh water, -g A rill of Lebanon.
Awake, O north wind, Come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden, That its perfume may spread. Let my beloved come to his garden And enjoy its luscious fruits!

Chapter 5

I have come to my garden, My own, my bride; I have plucked my myrrh and spice, Eaten my honey and honeycomb, Drunk my wine and my milk. Eat, lovers, and drink: Drink deep of love!
a In vv. 2–8 the maiden relates a dream. I was asleep, But my heart was wakeful. Hark, my beloved knocks! "Let me in, my own, My darling, my faultless dove! For my head is drenched with dew, My locks with the damp of night."
I had taken off my robe— Was I to don it again? I had bathed my feet— Was I to soil them again?
My beloved b Meaning of Heb. uncertain. took his hand off the latch, -b And my heart was stirred c Many manuscripts and editions read "within me" (ʻalai). for him. -c
I rose to let in my beloved; My hands dripped myrrh— My fingers, flowing myrrh— Upon the handles of the bolt.
I opened the door for my beloved, But my beloved had turned and gone. I was faint d Change of vocalization yields "because of him." because of what he said. -d I sought, but found him not; I called, but he did not answer.
I met the watchmen e See note at 3.3. Who patrol the town; They struck me, they bruised me. The guards of the walls Stripped me of my mantle.
I adjure you, O maidens of Jerusalem! If you meet my beloved, tell him this: That I am faint with love.
How is your beloved better than another, f Or "What sort of beloved is your beloved?" O fairest of women? How is your beloved better than another f Or "What sort of beloved is your beloved?" That you adjure us so?
My beloved is clear-skinned and ruddy, Preeminent among ten thousand.

His head is finest gold, His locks are curled And black as a raven.
His eyes are like doves By watercourses, Bathed in milk, b Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Set by a brimming pool. -b
His cheeks are like beds of spices, g Septuagint vocalizes as participle, “producing.” Banks of -g perfume His lips are like lilies; They drip flowing myrrh.
His hands are rods of gold, Studded with beryl; His belly a tablet of ivory, Adorned with sapphires.
His legs are like marble pillars Set in sockets of fine gold. He is majestic as Lebanon, Stately as the cedars.
His mouth is delicious And all of him is delightful. Such is my beloved, Such is my darling, O maidens of Jerusalem!

Chapter 6

“Whither has your beloved gone, O fairest of women? Whither has your beloved turned? Let us seek him with you.”
My beloved has gone down to his garden, To the beds of spices, To browse in the gardens And to pick lilies.
I am my beloved’s And my beloved is mine; He browses among the lilies.
You are beautiful, my darling, as Tirzah, Comely as Jerusalem, a Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Awesome as bannered hosts. -a
Turn your eyes away from me, For they overwhelm me! Your hair is like a flock of goats Streaming down from Gilead.
Your teeth are like a flock of ewes Climbing up from the washing pool; All of them bear twins, And not one loses her young.
Your brow behind your veil [Gleams] like a pomegranate split open.
There are sixty queens, And eighty concubines, And damsels without number.
Only one is my dove, My perfect one, The only one of her mother, The delight of her who bore her. Maidens see and acclaim her; Queens and concubines, and praise her.
Who is she that shines through like the dawn, Beautiful as the moon, Radiant as the sun a Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Awesome as bannered hosts? -a
I went down to the nut grove To see the budding of the vale; To see if the vines had blossomed, If the pomegranates were in bloom.
a Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Before I knew it, My desire set me Mid the chariots of Ammi-nadib. -a

Chapter 7

Turn back, turn back, O maid of Shulem! Turn back, turn back, That we may gaze upon you. “Why will you gaze at the Shulammite In a With many manuscripts and editions; others read “like.” Meaning of entire line uncertain. the Mahanaim dance?”
How lovely are your feet in sandals, O daughter of nobles! Your rounded thighs are like jewels, The work of a master’s hand.
Your navel is like a round goblet— Let mixed wine not be lacking!— Your belly like a heap of wheat Hedged about with lilies.
Your breasts are like two fawns, Twins of a gazelle.
Your neck is like a tower of ivory, Your eyes like pools in Heshbon By the gate of Bath-rabbim, Your nose like the Lebanon tower That faces toward Damascus.
The head upon you is like b So Ibn Janah and Ibn Ezra, taking karmel as a by-form of karmil: cf. 2 Chron. 2.6, 13; 3.14. crimson wool, -b The locks of your head are like purple— c Meaning of Heb. uncertain. A king is held captive in the tresses. -c
How fair you are, how beautiful! O Love, with all its rapture!
Your stately form is like the palm, Your breasts are like clusters.

I say: Let me climb the palm, Let me take hold of its branches; Let your breasts be like clusters of grapes, Your breath like the fragrance of apples,
And your mouth like choicest wine. “Let it flow to my beloved as new wine d See note at 1.4 end. c Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Gliding over the lips of sleepers.” -c
I am my beloved’s, And his desire is for me.
Come, my beloved, Let us go into the open; Let us lodge e Or “in the villages.” among the henna shrubs. -e
Let us go early to the vineyards; Let us see if the vine has flowered, If its blossoms have opened, If the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give my love to you.
The mandrakes yield their fragrance, At our doors are all choice fruits; Both freshly picked and long-stored Have I kept, my beloved, for you.

Chapter 8

If only it could be as with a brother, As if you had nursed at my mother’s breast: Then I could kiss you When I met you in the street, And no one would despise me.
I would lead you, I would bring you To the house of my mother, Of her who taught a Emendation yields “bore”; cf. 6.9; 8.5. me— I would let you drink of the spiced wine, Of my pomegranate juice.
His left hand was under my head, His right hand caressed me.
I adjure you, O maidens of Jerusalem: Do not wake or rouse Love until it please!
Who is she that comes up from the desert, Leaning upon her beloved? Under the apple tree I roused you; It was there your mother conceived you, There she who bore you conceived you.
Let me be a seal upon your heart, Like the seal upon your hand. b Lit. “arm.” For love is fierce as death, Passion is mighty as Sheol; Its darts are darts of fire, A blazing flame.
Vast floods cannot quench love, Nor rivers drown it. If a man offered all his wealth for love, He would be laughed to scorn.
“We have a little sister, Whose breasts are not yet formed. What shall we do for our sister When she is spoken for?
If she be a wall, We will build upon it a silver battlement; If she be a door, We will panel it in cedar.”
I am a wall, My breasts are like towers. So I became in his eyes As one who finds favor.
Solomon had a vineyard In Baal-hamon. He had to post guards in the vineyard: A man would give for its fruit A thousand pieces of silver.
I have my very own vineyard: You may have the thousand, O Solomon, And the guards of the fruit two hundred!
O you who linger in the garden, c Heb. plural. Meaning of verse uncertain. A lover c Heb. plural. Meaning of verse uncertain. is listening; Let me hear your voice.
“Hurry, my beloved, Swift as a gazelle or a young stag, To the hills of spices!”